

Database Action Plan for Veterinary Accreditation Safeguarding Issue (updated 6/21/04)

Issue Group: Veterinary Accreditation

Specific Activity Being Addressed by this Action Plan: Veterinary Accreditation Program database

Recommendations covered:

69: Direct APHIS to revise and implement a private veterinarian accreditation program with sufficient funding to be free of user's fees, and to establish foreign animal disease (FAD) continuing education as a requirement of the program.

101: Strengthen the federal system of accreditation for veterinarians with more stringent qualifications, including a requirement for (funded) continuing education in foreign animal disease, and reporting and use of international animal health information.

145: Revise and upgrade the national veterinary accreditation program to include -standardized national training and reinstatement of the examination.....

-periodic communication with all accredited veterinarians to emphasize their important role in certification of animal movement, reporting, and response to unusual animal diseases or conditions

-mandatory training to maintain accreditation

146: Continue development of two levels of accreditation; Large Animal Category and Non-large Animal Category. Make paramount the emphasis on FAD diagnosis along with continuing education for the Large Animal Category.

147: Expand the Accreditation Program to be the core for emergency preparedness and the response plan.

Issue Group Findings: The current Veterinary Accreditation System Database (VAS) has been effective in maintaining a national list of accredited veterinarians accessible to the Area Offices. This current data base allows entry of information about new accredited veterinarians by the Area Offices and the retrieval of accreditation status to determine eligibility of veterinarians providing services requiring accreditation. The database is not up to date as regards the listings of veterinarians and is not considered to be user friendly in some Area Offices. Some Area Offices have opted to create alternative databases to maintain their data. In addition, the accreditation program enhancements proposed in Recommendations 69, 101, 145, 146, and 147 will require additions to the database capabilities that are not currently available.

The proposed changes to the Veterinary Accreditation Program that impact database needs include a 2-tier system; a renewal process based on requirements for continuing education that must be recorded in the database; the need to include accreditation specializations, i.e. trichinae certified veterinarians; and a need to link the database into a communication system that will allow selection of subgroups of individuals for transmission of information. Form fields will need to be redesigned for the Program changes. Form letters should be on line to facilitate communications. Consideration of

possible availability of access to the VAS through the APHIS website may eliminate the need for client-side software.

The requirement in the updated accreditation for 3-year renewal will help keep the information current in the database and eliminate current inaccuracies. In addition, modules for continuing education will be offered centrally. Entries into the database to keep records of continuing education current may require additional personnel hours centrally. Some of the entries into the database, such as name and address changes, will probably be done at the Area Level. It would be desirable to have the Internet capabilities so that veterinarians applying for the accreditation program can fill out a form on-line. This system could also be used for updating personal information, such as name and address changes.

Because State Animal Health Offices are also dependent on the Area Offices accessing VAS, State Offices may benefit from access to the database. It is hoped that the new system will have the flexibility for this. This feature alone will save many hours of Area Office time for the data entry clerk using the Veterinary Accreditation System (VAS) database. At the same time, there is a concern for security of the data within the VAS, so this will have to be taken into consideration during development of the new system. To avoid duplication of records, which is a problem with the current system, the social security number should be required for accreditation. The social security number would be tied to a unique VAS ID that the accredited veterinarian will be required to use on Federal forms and for updating their information on VAS (among other things). The social security number will need to be an encrypted field that will only be visible to the systems administrator

While the VAS database is maintained separately from Program data systems (e.g. the Generic Database) it is important that all avenues be explored when implementing the new system so that the VAS can benefit from technology enhancements as they occur through Agency technology experts and so that links can be made between the VAS and the other databases.

Proposed Actions:

- Make system changes that will not interrupt the use of the Veterinary Accreditation Data System.
 - Assure the updated or new VAS meets the needs of all users, i.e., field, State, headquarters, the general public, and the accredited veterinarians themselves
 - Assure that this system is user-friendly and that all users will be able to access and operate it easily
- Select information technology that will integrate with APHIS systems and that will perform effectively for the Accreditation Program
- Update data systems regularly as recommended by ITS.
- Maximize the use of electronic systems to transmit information and data between Program Specialists, Area Offices, State Offices, and accredited veterinarians
- Maximize the use of electronic systems to provide continuing education

- Assure that there is a built-in system for providing all resources necessary to maintain quality standards for Veterinary Accreditation database.
- Assure that there are sufficient support personnel to provide data entry services effectively and efficiently
- Assure that system security safeguards are provided

Implementation Plan:

Tasks:

- By June 1, 2004, implement a steering committee consisting of VS IT specialists, Program Specialists, and database users to oversee the updating of the VAS database to include the 2-tier system, renewal of accreditation, accreditation specializations, and continuing education.
 - The technology used for the database should allow VAS to connect with Emergency Management Response System (EMRS) and other databases.
 - Through the automated system, maximize reduction of paper through compliance with the Government Paper Efficiency Act in providing forms applicable to the NVAP.-
- Annually, starting with FY 05, assure that adequate resources are provided for regular entry of program data and for updating and troubleshooting database as needed. There must be sufficient support personnel to provide data entry services effectively and efficiently.
- By October 2005, have system in service that will provide for data entry needs to maintain the 2 category veterinary accreditation system with capabilities for keeping records required for accreditation renewal. Assure that it –
 - integrates with the EMRS,
 - maximizes use of electronic systems to transmit information and data between Program Specialists, Regional Offices, Area Offices, State Offices, and accredited veterinarians,
 - maximizes use of electronic systems to provide continuing education,
 - and contains system security safeguards to protect the information contained within.

Accountable Individual/Group – National Veterinary Accreditation Program Coordinator, VS Information Technology Staff, VAS steering committee

Other Key Players – VS Area Offices, accredited veterinarians, Safeguarding Issues Group

Resources Needed – (See estimates in attached 8-75) Information technology support services, data entry staff, up to date and effective hardware and software systems

Statutory/Regulatory Impacts – The changes in the Veterinary Accreditation System will require changes in the Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 9, Parts 161, 162, and 163. Changes will address the elements of the new program. The new Program will also require adherence with system security and confidentiality requirements and the GPEA.

Political Sensitivities: There are issues of confidentiality of data and security of personal information contained in the database. These must be addressed satisfactorily and the information about how these have been addressed must be disseminated appropriately.

Linkages of the Veterinary Accreditation database to State Departments of Agriculture must be managed to maintain security and confidence in the system.

Sequencing: The steering team must be implemented immediately to make decisions regarding the new system as it develops. The new system must be developed side by side with the old system as Veterinary Accreditation Program changes are made to maintain continuous service. The system must be quality tested. Confidentiality issues must be addressed. The new, or updated, VAS should be in place by October 2005.

Partnership/Cooperation/Communication

The database issue is one internal to the Agency. Partnerships will include the National Program Staff, the APHIS information technology resources, and the Safeguarding Information Technology Issue Group. The product will enhance partnering and communication with a number of external groups to include State Agencies and private practitioner groups.

Expected Outcome and Performance Indicators

The database enhancement required for the new Veterinary Accreditation Program must be in place before the new regulations have been implemented. This will not be completed before FY05. Performance outcome goals include the capability to maintain up-to-date information about accredited veterinarians by state, category, specialization, status, etc; the ability to provide continuing education electronically; and the ability to provide data for communications systems while maintaining system security.

Linkage to VS Strategic Plan

Objective 3.1: Respond effectively to adverse animal health events and continue to improve the national animal health emergency response capabilities

The database will provide a cadre of veterinarians who have received training in prevention of and response to foreign and emerging diseases. This resource will be used to form response teams for animal health emergency events.

Objective 3.4: Reduce the incidence and spread of serious animal diseases including those with public health/food safety implications.

The data base will have the capability of flagging veterinarians who are falling behind in the continuing education requirement and help keep them up to date on risk reduction and biosecurity needed to reduce the incidence of serious animal diseases.

Objective 5.2: Improve internal and external communication in order to increase awareness and enhance cooperation and coordination.

The data base will maintain current sources of veterinarians by classification and specialization that will be used as resources for communication of animal health events.

Objective 5.3: Utilize information technology effectively. This objective is applicable to the Veterinary Accreditation Program for all of the above reasons. Effective use of information technology is key to the success of the National Veterinary Accreditation Program.